

WE CLAIM:

1. A method in a computer system for initiating and managing a volunteer group program that includes a plurality of volunteers, the method comprising:

providing an information menu of predetermined program goals to a 5 user of the computer system;

providing an interactive process to the user through the computer system to enable the user to select at least one of the program goals on the menu to pursue;

generating and outputting electronically, from the computer system, 10 an organizational framework based on the at least one selected goal, with specific roles, responsibilities, and features needed to achieve the at least one selected goal;

providing tools for:

recruiting additional volunteers;

15 managing and scheduling the efforts of the additional volunteers; and

communicating details related to progress of the volunteer group program to all interested parties;

providing an option to the user to set a requirement of password 20 access to control access of others to a World Wide Web site associated with the volunteer group program and accessible through the computer system;

providing project timelines, procedures, content guidelines, examples, and editable copy from the computer system for use by the additional volunteers; and

- providing promotional materials generated by the computer system
- 5 to build awareness of the volunteer group program among potential new volunteers.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the tools are provided for use through the World Wide Web site accessible through the computer system.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein access to the tools are provided by telephone means.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the managing and scheduling of the efforts of the additional volunteers includes:

 periodically checking selected tasks for timely completion; and
 transmitting to a responsible volunteer **team member** a request for completion of a non-completed task.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the managing and scheduling further comprises:

 periodically checking previously posted and selected tasks for timely completion; and

transmitting to the responsible volunteer a second request for completion of any non-completed task.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing a computer system reminder sub-routine to track tasks of the volunteer group program, and to generate and send reminder messages to responsible volunteers via communication means to insure that the tasks are not overlooked.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing a calendar subsystem of the computer system to list information on specific dates for which volunteer efforts are needed, and to publicize the work of volunteers up to a given date.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing the computer system with a message board management system to manage the posting and viewing of messages to a message board server connected to the computer system which stores and maintains an electronic message board to enable users to publish information and statements of encouragement to the team and the individual or group which the team supports in performing the volunteer group program.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing a World Wide Web or private network interface of the computer system to allow access to a Web site associated with the volunteer group program to provide information to Web site visitors regarding the volunteer group program.

10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing Internet-based access to computer system for Internet users with Internet access; and

providing telephone-based access to the computer system for telephone users without Internet access.

11. A computer-based system for initiating and managing a volunteer group program, comprising:

at least one communication device; and

a computer connected to the communication device and including:

5 means for providing an information menu of possible

program goals to the user;

means for providing a process to the user for facilitating the user to decide on which of the possible program goals to pursue;

means for generating and outputting electronically an

10 organizational framework based on the decided goals, with specific roles, responsibilities, and features needed to achieve the decided goals;

means for providing tools for recruiting additional volunteers, managing and scheduling the efforts of the additional volunteers, and communicating details related to progress of the volunteer group program to all interested parties;

5 means for providing an option to the user to set a requirement of password access to control access of others to a Web site associated with the volunteer group program;

10 means for providing project timelines, procedures, content guidelines, examples, and editable copy from the computer system for use by the additional volunteers; and

means for providing promotional materials generated by the computer system to build awareness of the volunteer group program among potential new volunteers.

12. The computer-based system of claim 11, wherein the means for providing tools includes:

means for accessing the tools through the World Wide Web site.

13. The computer-based system of claim 11, wherein the means for providing tools includes:

means for accessing the tools through a telephone.

14. The computer-based system of claim 11, wherein the means for managing and scheduling of the efforts of the additional volunteers includes:

means for periodically checking tasks for timely completion; and

means for notifying a responsible team member to request completion of non-completed tasks.

15. The computer-based system of claim 11, wherein the means for managing and scheduling further comprises:

means for periodically checking previously notified tasks for timely completion; and

means for notifying the responsible team member a second time to request completion of non-completed tasks.

16. The computer-based system of claim 11, further comprising:

a reminder subsystem of the computer system to track tasks of the volunteer group program, and to generate and send reminder messages via a communication mechanism to appropriate team members to insure that the tasks are not overlooked.

17. The computer-based system of claim 11, further comprising:

a calendar subsystem of the computer system to list information on specific dates for which volunteer efforts are needed, and to publicize the work of volunteers up to a given date.

18. The computer-based system of claim 11, further comprising:
 - a message board subsystem of the computer system to manage the posting and viewing of messages to a message board server connected to the computer system which stores and maintains an electronic message board to enable users to publish information and statements of encouragement to the team and the individual or group which the team supports in performing the volunteer group program.
19. The computer-based system of claim 11, further comprising:
 - a World Wide Web interface of the computer system to allow access to a Web site associated with the volunteer group program to provide information to users regarding the volunteer group program.
20. The computer-based system of claim 11, further comprising:
 - means for providing Internet-based access to computer system for Internet users with Internet access; and
 - means for providing telephone-based access to the computer system for telephone users without Internet access.